



Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling is a technique used by filmmakers to tell their stories using action rather than dialogue (words or speech).

Instead of characters explaining how they are feeling or what they are thinking (which might be quite dull for the audience), it is easier to give the audience information through the character's actions and movements.

This rule can be remembered as Show, Don't Tell!

Example 1:

Instead of having your character shout, "I am so ANGRY!" you could show them slamming a door, frowning and kicking a chair. There would be no doubt that this person was angry and the audience would understand this straight away.

Visual storytelling can also be used effectively to show what a character is thinking. A character might not speak their thoughts aloud, but their actions and movements can help the audience to understand thoughts and ideas.

Example 2:

Instead of having your character saying, "I'm going to steal the robot's gun and escape!" you could show her looking from the robot to the gun and then to the door of the spaceship.



Activity: Script Stories

In this script you will see that the scriptwriter has included dialogue, and has also included a description to tell the audience more about the character, Bill.

As you read the script, can you find the words and phrases the scriptwriter has used to tell the audience about the character, Bill?

INT. LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON.

BILL (16) is dressed casually in jeans, t-shirt and mismatched socks. He hasn't washed for a few days. He is lying on a battered sofa in the lounge of a suburban family home.

BILL tries to read a magazine but throws it aside after a few seconds. He checks his mobile phone: no messages.

BILL flicks the TV on using a remote. An alien-abduction film fills the screen, bright colours, shouts and screams explode into the room. BILL immediately sits up to watch it: he is transfixed.

BILL

Wooooow! I wish...!

Suddenly, a loud crash and huge bang! Smoke fills the room.

BILL

Aaarh! What's happening? LET ME GO!

ROBOT

Engage the laser beam! Capture the human specimen!

A green laser beam cuts through the smoke, BILL levitates off the sofa...

How has the scriptwriter told the audience about Bill's boredom?

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Activity: Show, Don't Tell!

- FOR THIS ACTIVITY YOU WILL NEED:**
- A camera/tablet/smartphone
 - Groups of 2-4 people
 - Camera Shots Sheet
 - Storyboard Template or large piece of paper and pens to create your own

How to complete this activity

- Imagine that you are a scriptwriter and you have been asked to revise the script for a film.
- The director thinks there is too much dialogue in the script and wants you to make some of the key scenes more visually creative.
- You have selected the following five lines of dialogue to change:
 - "I'm hungry"
 - "I've lost the cat"
 - "I'm so tired"
 - "I'm late for school"
 - "I'm really annoyed with her"
- Using these lines of dialogue, write a short description of the shots you would film, to show what the character is feeling.

"I'm hungry!"

"I've lost the cat!"

"I'm so tired!"

"I'm late for school!"

"I'm really annoyed with her!"

- Now use the Storyboard Template to plan the camera shots you will use. Once complete, use your camera, tablet or smartphone to record the shots, aiming to shoot between 10 and 30 seconds of film.
- Think about what you will need to include in the shot to make it clear to the audience what the character is thinking or feeling.
- When you have shot your scene, share this with another group and ask them to guess what the character is thinking or feeling.